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NLR-77-17 # 4  
Appeal

Secretary McNamara reported on the positions of Soviet Bloc ships moving toward Cuba. He said we do not know yet whether any such ships will enter the interception area. He recommended that we be prepared to board the Graznyy, which is now out about 600 miles. We would put ships alongside her and follow along for about 200 miles.

The President agreed that we should ask U Thant to tell the Russians in New York where we are drawing the quarantine line. The Russians would then be in a position to decide whether to turn back their tanker or allow her to enter the quarantine zone sometime later today.

The discussion then turned to the question of U.S. missiles in Turkey. Mr. Nitze said it would be an anathema to the Turks to pull the missiles out. He feared the next Soviet step would be a demand for the denuclearization of the entire NATO area. He urged us to focus attention on Cuba rather than on U.S. bases in other countries.

Under Secretary Ball reported

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At this point in the meeting the partial text of a Soviet public statement was read by the President as it was received in the room. The President commented that the statement was a very tough position and varied considerably from the tone of Khrushchev's personal letter to the President received last night. The President felt that the Soviet position would get wide support and said we should consider making public the Khrushchev private letter.

Secretary Rusk returned to the question of U.S. missiles in Turkey and pointed out that this subject must be kept separate from Soviet missiles in Cuba. The Turkish missile problem should be dealt with in the context of NATO vs. Warsaw Pact.

Mr. Bundy said we could not accept the Soviet proposal on Turkish missiles because the Soviet missiles were not out of Cuba.

The President recalled that he had asked that consideration be given to the withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey some days previously.

Under Secretary Ball replied that the Department had decided it could not raise this question with the Turks at this time for fear of a disastrous Turkish reaction. He said the question had been raised with Finletter in Paris and study was being given to whether any method could be worked out to reassure the Turks if we were going to offer to withdraw the Jupiter missiles.

Mr. Bundy said we cannot get into the position of appearing to sell out an ally, i.e. Turkey, to serve our own interests, i.e. getting the Soviet missiles out of Cuba.

The President commented that the Russians had made the Turkish missile withdrawal proposal in the most difficult possible way. Now that their proposal is public, we have no chance to talk privately to the Turks about the missiles, which, for a long time, we have considered to be obsolete.

Secretary Dillon said that it was possible that the Russians had made their public statement as part of a stalling tactic to provide them with sufficient time for a full-fledged confrontation with us.

The President read a draft statement telephoned from New York by Ambassador Stevenson commenting on the Soviet statement. Ambassador Stevenson argued for releasing his statement in an effort to keep the "peace offensive" from going to the Soviets.

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The President left the meeting at this point with Mr. Sorensen. There ensued a discussion of how to handle the discrepancy between the Khrushchev private letter and the Russian offer made public in the Soviet statement. A suggestion was made that the Russian proposals contained in the private Khrushchev letter be made public.

The President returned to the meeting. He said we must ensure that the construction work on the missile sites in Cuba be stopped at once. He suggested that we talk to the Turks about the missiles, pointing out to them the great peril facing them during the next week. He acknowledged that the Turks were now in no position to make a statement to the effect that they would ask that the Jupiters be withdrawn.

Secretary Rusk suggested that we tell the Turks they must say that the Jupiter problem is a NATO problem and is not associated with the Cuban missile problem.

Secretary McNamara called attention to the fact that the missiles belonged to Turkey and that only the nuclear warheads are under our total control.

The President returned to a discussion of where we now find ourselves, i.e. we now have Soviet public proposals and Khrushchev's private proposals. What we must seek is an immediate cessation of the work on offensive missiles in Cuba. Once this work stopped we could talk to the Russians.

Mr. Bundy reiterated the view that the threat to us in Cuba. One explanation for the varying Soviet proposals is that the hard line Russians wanted to make public their preferred demands in order to make impossible progress toward the Khrushchev private offer which may have been drafted by those who are less hard-nosed.

The President noted that it appeared to him that the Russians were making various proposals so fast, one after the other, that they were creating a kind of shield behind which work on the missile sites in Cuba continued. He said we had a perfectly defensible position, i.e. work on the missile sites must stop. Secretary McNamara added the thought that these offensive weapons must be made inoperable.

Mr. Bundy suggested that we tell Khrushchev privately that the position in their public statement was impossible for us, but that the position

Khrushchev took in his private letter was different and we were studying these proposals. In the meantime, however, time is running out.

The President interrupted to take a telephone call from Ambassador Stevenson in New York. He resumed the discussion by saying that Khrushchev obviously is attempting to limit our freedom of action in Cuba by introducing the question of the missile bases outside this hemisphere.

Mr. Bundy read a draft press statement and Mr. Gilpatric read a statement which he had prepared.

Mr. Alexis Johnson reported that he had just been informed that the Turkish Government had issued a press statement saying that the Russian proposal with respect to Jupiters in Turkey was not conceivable.

(As the remainder of the Soviet public statement was received in the Cabinet Room, it appeared that the Russian base proposal involved not merely Turkey but all of NATO.)

Mr. Sorensen introduced a draft statement which was read by the group.

Revisions were made in the Gilpatric draft, which was issued shortly thereafter in the form attached. This statement emphasized the offensive weapons buildup in Cuba.

The Attorney General said that the statement might make people think that if the Russians stopped the missile buildup in Cuba, we would be willing to withdraw our missiles from Turkey. He desired that we make doubly clear that Turkish NATO missiles were one problem and that Cuba was an entirely separate problem.

Mr. Gilpatric stated that it was crucial for us to stand on the position that we will not negotiate with the Russians while the Soviet missile threat is growing in Cuba.

The President recalled that over a year ago we wanted to get the Jupiter missiles out of Turkey because they had become obsolete and of little military value. If the missiles in Cuba added 50% to Soviet nuclear capability, then to trade these missiles for those in Turkey would be of great military value. But we are now in the position of risking war in Cuba and in Berlin over missiles in Turkey which are of little military value. From the political point of view, it would be hard to get support on an airstrike

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against Cuba because many would think that we would make a good trade if we offered to take the missiles out of Turkey in the event the Russians would agree to remove the missiles from Cuba. We are in a bad position if we appear to be attacking Cuba for the purpose of keeping useless missiles in Turkey. We cannot propose to withdraw the missiles from Turkey, but the Turks could offer to do so. The Turks must be informed of the great danger in which they will live during the next week and we have to face up to the possibility of some kind of a trade over missiles.

The President left the meeting to meet the State Governors who had been waiting for one-half hour to see him.

The discussion continued in the President's absence. It was not possible to say with certainty whether the Soviet public offer included all NATO bases or referred specifically to Turkey.

The Attorney General expressed his concern as to what our position would be if we talked to the Russians for sixty days and then the Cubans refused to permit UN inspectors to continue to ensure that missiles in Cuba were inoperable. The reply was that we could then decide to attack the bases by air.

There was discussion of a second statement to be put out but this proposal was later abandoned.

A draft message to Khrushchev, which had been prepared by Ambassador Thompson, was read and a final version was to be completed for the President's consideration later in the day. The group agreed to meet at the State Department without the President at 2:30 PM and meet with the President again at 4:00 PM.

(Note: At the meeting at the State Department, the Attorney General repeated his view that we should keep the focus on the missile bases. He preferred to let the Soviet tankers through the quarantine line in order to avoid a confrontation with the Soviets over one of their ships. He said if we attack a Soviet tanker, the balloon would go up. He urged that we buy time now in order to launch an air attack Monday or Tuesday.

Secretary McNamara expressed his view that before we attack Cuba we must notify the Cubans.

Bromley Smith